

## **My experience of visiting with SDV**

*By MK, member since 2005*

After reading a lot of negative news coverage on immigration, I realised that being held in Dungavel must be a very isolating experience. I joined SDV two years ago to show my solidarity and offer support to people who otherwise had little contact with the outside world.

After my induction, I was better informed about how and why people might find themselves in detention, and on my role as a visitor. On the evening of my first visit however, I did feel apprehensive. How would my presence, as a stranger, be received by someone I was visiting? The car journey I made with other visitors to the centre allowed me the opportunity to discuss questions I had about visiting.

That evening it became clear that the key support I could offer as a visitor was a friendly face and a non-judgemental ear. I met a diverse group of people: from those who needed to discuss their case to those who were happy for a general chat and a laugh. I was humbled by many stories. I still visit regularly.

Crucially, as SDV visits as a group, I've always felt assured I can speak to other visitors if I was unsure about an issue a detainee has raised. I can also be clear about the kind of practical help that I can offer someone.

I'll continue to be alarmed at the uncertain future people still face after they leave Dungavel, and I'm amazed at the stoicism that many people still show even in such circumstances.